



State of California—Health and Human
Services Agency
**California Department of
Public Health**



June 9, 2021

TO: All Californians

SUBJECT: Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings



Note: New Face Coverings guidance will go into effect on June 15, 2021.

Related Materials: Face Coverings Fact sheet (PDF) | Face Mask Tips and Resources | Face Shields Q&A (PDF) | All Guidance | More Languages

Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings

Note: The following guidance is in effect through June 14, 2021. See also guidance that will take effect on June 15, 2021.

Background

The risk for COVID-19 exposure and infection will continue to remain until we reach community immunity from vaccinations. Since the start of the pandemic, we have learned a lot about COVID-19 transmission: a large proportion of people who are infected do not have symptoms (asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic) but play an important part in community spread, and the virus is transmitted through the air and concentrates indoors. The use of face coverings by everyone can limit the release of infected droplets when talking, coughing, sneezing, singing, exercising, shouting, or other forms of increased respiration, and reinforce physical distancing by signaling the need to remain apart. A well-fitting face covering can also provide the wearer some protection from COVID-19.

The purpose of this guidance is to provide information about when face coverings are required for members of the general public. It does not substitute for existing guidance about physical distancing and hand hygiene. In the workplace, employers subject to the Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards (ETS), must ensure that all workers are provided and properly wear face coverings as required by the ETS.

For more information on face mask types, fit, and filtration, refer to the CDPH Face Mask Tips and Resources.

Guidance

1. For **fully vaccinated** persons, face coverings are not required outdoors except when attending crowded outdoor events, such as live performances, parades, fairs, festivals, sports events, or other similar settings.
2. For **unvaccinated** persons, face coverings are **required** outdoors *any time physical distancing cannot be maintained*, including when attending crowded outdoor events, such as live performances, parades, fairs, festivals, sports events, or other similar settings.
3. In indoor settings outside of one's home, including public transportation, face coverings continue to be **required** regardless of vaccination status, except as outlined below.
4. As defined in the CDPH Fully Vaccinated Persons Guidance, fully vaccinated people can*:
 - Visit, without wearing masks or physical distancing, with other fully vaccinated people in indoor or outdoor settings; and
 - Visit, without wearing masks or physical distancing, with unvaccinated people (including children) from a single household who are at low risk for severe COVID-19 disease in indoor and outdoor settings
5. Exemptions:
 - The following specific **settings** are exempt from face covering requirements:
 - Persons in a car alone or solely with members of their own household,
 - Persons who are working alone in a closed office or room,
 - Persons who are obtaining a medical or cosmetic service involving the nose or face for which temporary removal of the face covering is necessary to perform the service,
 - Workers who wear respiratory protection, or
 - Persons who are specifically exempted from wearing face coverings by other CDPH guidance.
 - The following **individuals** are exempt from wearing face coverings at all times:
 - Persons younger than two years old. Very young children must not wear a face covering because of the risk of suffocation.
 - Persons with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a face covering. This includes persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a face covering could obstruct breathing or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance.*
 - Persons who are hearing impaired, or communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.
 - Persons for whom wearing a face covering would create a risk to the person related to their work, as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.

*Note: Persons exempted from wearing a face covering due to a medical condition who are employed in a job involving regular contact with others must wear a non-restrictive alternative, such as a face shield with a drape on the bottom edge, as long as their condition permits it.

Guidance for the Use of Face Coverings (Takes Effect June 15, 2021)

Note: This guidance takes effect on June 15, 2021 and will supersede all prior face coverings guidance.

Background

The COVID-19 vaccines are effective in preventing infection, disease, and spread. Unvaccinated persons are more likely to get infected and spread the virus which is transmitted through the air and concentrates indoors. About 15% of our population remains without the option for vaccination (children under 12 years old are not yet eligible) and risk for COVID-19 exposure and infection will remain until we reach full community immunity.

The purpose of this guidance is to align with CDC recommendations and provide information about higher risk settings where masks are required or recommended to prevent transmission to persons with higher risk of infection (e.g., unvaccinated or immunocompromised persons), to persons with prolonged, cumulative exposures (e.g., workers), or to persons whose vaccination status is unknown. When people who are not fully vaccinated wear a mask correctly, they protect others as well as themselves. Consistent and correct mask use by people who are not fully vaccinated is especially important indoors.

In workplaces, employers are subject to the Cal/OSHA COVID-19 Emergency Temporary Standards (ETS) or in some workplaces the CalOSHA Aerosol Transmissible Diseases Standard, and should consult those regulations for additional applicable requirements.

Guidance for Individuals

Masks are **not required for fully vaccinated individuals, except** in the following settings where masks are required for everyone, regardless of vaccination status:

- On public transit[1] (examples: airplanes, ships, ferries, trains, subways, buses, taxis, and ride-shares) and in transportation hubs (examples: airport, bus terminal, marina, train station, seaport or other port, subway station, or any other area that provides transportation)
- **Indoors** in K-12 schools[2], childcare[3] and other youth settings.
 - Note: This may change as updated K-12 schools guidance is forthcoming, pending updates for K-12 operational guidance from the CDC.
- Healthcare settings[4] (including long term care facilities[5])
- State and local correctional facilities and detention centers[6]
- Homeless shelters[7], emergency shelters[8] and cooling centers[9]

Additionally, masks are **required** for unvaccinated individuals** in indoor public settings and businesses (examples: retail, restaurants, theaters, family entertainment centers, meetings, state and local government offices serving the public).

For additional information, individuals should refer to CDC Recommendations for Safer Activities (see CDPH Masking Guidance Frequently Asked Questions for more information).

**Guidance for Businesses, Venue Operators or Hosts

In settings where masks are required only for unvaccinated individuals, businesses, venue operators or hosts may choose to:

- Provide information to all patrons, guests and attendees regarding vaccination requirements and allow vaccinated individuals to self-attest that they are in compliance prior to entry.
- Implement vaccine verification to determine whether individuals are required to wear a mask.
- Require all patrons to wear masks.

No person can be prevented from wearing a mask as a condition of participation in an activity or entry into a business.

Exemptions to masks requirements

The following **individuals** are exempt from wearing masks at all times:

- Persons younger than two years old. Very young children must not wear a mask because of the risk of suffocation.
- Persons with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a mask. This includes persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a mask could obstruct breathing or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a mask without assistance.
- Persons who are hearing impaired, or communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.
- Persons for whom wearing a mask would create a risk to the person related to their work, as determined by local, state, or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.

[1] CDC Requirement for Face Masks on Public Transportation Conveyances and at Transportation Hubs

[2] CDC Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Prevention

[3] CDC Guidance for Operating Child Care Programs during COVID-19

[4] CDC Updated Healthcare Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations in Response to COVID-19 Vaccination

[5] CDC Interim Infection Prevention and Control Recommendations to Prevent SARS-CoV-2 Spread in Nursing Homes

[6] CDC Interim Guidance on Management of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Correctional and Detention Facilities

[7] CDC Interim Guidance for Homeless Service Providers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

[8] CDC Interim Guidance for General Population Disaster Shelters During the COVID-19 Pandemic

[9] CDC Interim guidance to reduce the risk of introducing and transmitting SARS COV-2 in cooling centers.

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